



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

19th District News

Spring 1997



**Representative
Brian Hatfield**

Olympia address:
317 John L. O'Brien Bldg
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7806

Committees:
Natural Resources
Commerce & Labor
Transportation Policy
& Budget
Coastal Caucus Chair
Assistant Floor Leader



**Representative
Mark Doumit**

Olympia address:
309 John L. O'Brien Bldg
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7870

Committees:
Appropriations,
Assistant Ranking Democrat
Government Administration

Toll-free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

TDD (for hearing impaired): 1-800-635-9993

Session review: The 1997 Legislature

Dear Friends:

This edition of the 19th District News highlights important issues we addressed in the 1997 Legislative Session. We are pleased to share this report on the discussions involving our region and our entire state.

Although the budget is usually the most publicized debate in Olympia, we study other matters that will also impact our state for generations to come. More than 2,000 bills were introduced by the 147 members of the Legislature this year! Most pieces of legislation that made it through the session received bipartisan backing; both parties agreed they were good ideas and should become the law of the state. Such wasn't the case with every bill we considered, however, and the disagreements are what the newspapers and other media are interested in reporting. Which is, of course, as it should be. That's the role of the press — to review the honest give-and-take that goes on in government.

Many of you have taken the time to contact us about these and other subjects. Your participation in the process is very much appreciated, and we are more effective because of your involvement and commitment. Please keep in touch whenever you can.

Respectfully yours,

Brian Hatfield *Mark L. Doumit*

Brian Hatfield

Mark Doumit

Working families:***Keeping faith with the people who make Washington work***

The economy is booming in many areas of Washington, especially around Puget Sound. But wages for a lot of people in our coastal region are stagnant — and worse than that, many citizens who do have a job wonder if today at work will be their last day at work.

We must provide more family-wage jobs and more training so that workers can support their families. In the last several years, we've helped citizens thrown out of their jobs in the natural-resource industries. But instead of continuing forward with honest assistance for working families, the legislative majority seems committed to retreat.

• Employment and Training Trust Fund

Supported by an employer tax that was offset by cuts in the unemployment-insurance taxes, this program has brought training in community and technical colleges to more than 20,000 unemployed workers. The training helps men and women in distressed regions stay on their feet when federal-court decisions and other problems out of their control threaten the survival of their families.

Unfortunately, the legislative majority decided to allow the trust fund to end, replacing it with general-fund money. This means that funding for the training programs, which had been very successfully provided through the offset tax, must compete with other programs. Further, the total funding has dropped from the current level of \$71 million down to \$60 million. Community colleges must choose between either eliminating financial aid, thus forcing many students to drop out, or reducing enrollment from the current 7,200 students to 5,900 students, thus denying 1,300 dislocated workers the opportunity to obtain retraining.

• Timber-Retraining Benefits

This program extends unemployment assistance for dislocated timber and fishing workers. Assistance has been provided for 22 rural, natural-resource counties, including the four counties of our region. Since 1991, the program has retrained 12,000 workers, including 4,500 in just the last couple of years.

Assistance will continue for timber and fisheries workers statewide, and help would be provided to workers in eight of the current 22 counties.

But funding will slide from \$60 million to \$22 million, and 2,925 people will be cut out.

• Jobs for the Environment

This win-win program used \$13.6 million last biennium to put 400 people back to work. Unemployed timber and fisheries workers participating in the watershed-restoration projects are bringing paychecks home again.

Initially, Senate Republicans sliced funding from \$13.6 million to \$6 million, eliminating 200 jobs for displaced workers. Opposition from House Democrats convinced Republicans to restore \$3 million for a total of \$9.1 million. This means that the program has been cut by \$3.5 million, eliminating “only” about 100 jobs.

• Rural marketing

We won support for a plan to help distressed rural counties that want to establish rural-enterprise zones. The plan will include assistance in:

- attracting businesses to rural counties,
- developing stronger economies in rural regions,
- cleaning up polluted rural industrial sites to be used as sites for future industrial development, and
- establishing rural-enterprise zones and foreign-trade zones.



Brian was proud to work with Emilia Rorden, a daughter of Janice and David Rorden of Longview. Emilia was one of the Pages in this year's session and she is a Mark Morris High School student.

19th District News

Coastal protection:

Long-sought ban against drilling is the law of the state — at last!

We finally convinced the majority party to agree to a permanent ban against oil and gas drilling along the Washington coast.

A temporary drilling ban was first set eight years ago, and it was extended last year to the year 2000. In the last two legislative sessions, we tried to make the ban permanent.

Mark has personal and professional experience with oil spills. He knows from first-hand knowledge that an oil spill is an economic and environmental disaster. A commercial fisher when the Legislature isn't in session, he's seen and had to put up with two major oil spills in Alaskan waters. The permanent ban will protect our coast in the present, and guard against any disasters in future generations.

A regional treasure:

Public use of the Elk River Estuary will be maintained

The Elk River Estuary in Grays Harbor County will remain open to the public, according to the terms of legislation we approved this year. The Department of Natural Resources must include public use of the estuary in the management plan for the area.

The legislation changes the Elk River Estuary from a Natural Area Preserve to less restrictive designation as a Natural Resources Conservation Area. Brian worked to convince the department that hunting and fishing are appropriate public uses in the estuary. People in south-west Washington have enjoyed and respected the estuary for many decades.

Taxpayer dollars:

Improved policy restricts use of public money for disability pensions

Law-enforcement officers and other public employees will no longer be able to receive disability-retirement pensions if their disability or condition was the result of criminal conduct. The proposal came about in response

to an incident involving a former police chief in south-west Washington.

The former chief had been charged with indecent liberties and sexual exploitation of a minor. He was granted benefits for disability retirement last year. The new law doesn't apply to the former chief, but it's important that this policy become state policy. Taxpayer money shouldn't be providing disability-retirement benefits for a person who has committed a crime and whose disability happened as a result of the person's criminal activity.

This new law doesn't apply to a public employee's regular retirement benefits, only to disability-retirement benefits.

Tax deferrals:

New law will expand assistance program for senior citizens

The governor has signed legislation that would expand the property-tax-deferral program for senior citizens and disabled citizens. Qualified citizens will be able to defer payment of all special tax assessments. This is very important because some people have actually lost their homes when they couldn't defer some special assessment.

Citizens who are at least 60 years old by December 31 of the year in which they apply for benefits are eligible to participate in the tax-deferral program. Citizens who are unable to work because of a physical disability may also apply for the program. In order to qualify for the tax deferrals, an applicant's household income must be below \$34,000 a year.

Public safety:

Holding criminal youth accountable for their lawlessness

We have a right to feel safe in our homes, on our streets and around our communities. We also have a responsibility to make sure that children are safe in their schools. One of the most serious threats to public safety today is that young lawbreakers frequently aren't held accountable for their crimes.

Representative Brian Hatfield

Representative Mark Doumit

But a new law we approved this year will go a long way toward getting the message across that criminal behavior will not be tolerated — and it will be punished. The new law directs that the most violent juvenile offenders will be tried as adults, and they will now face more serious sentences. Crimes such as a first-degree robbery, the rape of a child, a drive-by shooting, a first-degree burglary if the perpetrator has a previous conviction, and a violent crime if the juvenile was carrying a firearm during the crime will dictate tougher punishment.

The juveniles who are involved in relatively minor, first-time offenses will be ordered through diversion programs so they have an opportunity to get back on the right track. Another important component in the new law is that juvenile offenders who receive a more serious sentence will be incarcerated separately from adult felons. We agree that teen-agers should be punished more severely if they are repeat, violent offenders. But we don't believe that these young offenders should be locked up in an adult prison atmosphere.

Are you interested?

***Self-help-housing
program is looking for
families who want to join***

Are you interested in participating in a program that allows you to help build your own affordable home?

If you answered "Yes" to that question, please consider participating in the Lower Columbia Community Action Council's self-help-housing program. The program encourages all citizens to apply, including men and

women who have no construction experience. The difficult jobs in the construction projects are contracted out, and each building group consists of six to 10 families. There is a project planned in Raymond, for example, that you might like to join. Call the council at 360-425-3430 if you would like to receive additional information.



Mark joined other legislators and the governor in welcoming a delegation of Japanese officials from the Hyogo Prefectural Assembly in April. The Japanese visitors were here to tour the Port of Longview and other Cowlitz County facilities.

**Representative Brian Hatfield
Representative Mark Doumit**

PO BOX 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Session review:
The 1997
Legislature**

BULK RATE
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing